

St. Thomas More Happiness Preschool

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the St. Thomas More Happiness Preschool. This handbook has been assembled to provide you with, what we hope, will be helpful information as you and your child begin the new and exciting experience of preschool.

Our primary objective is to assist your child in making this first school experience a positive and happy one while building a moral, social and academic foundation. The purpose of the information and suggestions provided here is to assist you in helping your child to adjust to this new experience.

To accomplish this goal, we encourage open communication between home and school. Please feel free to talk to your child's teachers or the Director. While parent-teacher conferences are scheduled, your child's teachers would be happy to arrange an appointment to meet with you at any time during the school year to discuss your child's progress.

Please review the enclosed material and refer to the handbook during the school year.

Again, on behalf of our Pastor, Father Paul G. Murphy, and the entire teaching staff we welcome you and your child to the Happiness Preschool. We all look forward to a happy and productive year!

God Bless,

Maria Oliveira
Director

Please read the entire **Parent Handbook**, sign the form on the back page and submit at the Parent Orientation.

St Thomas More
Happiness Preschool

**374 Middlesex Road
Darien. Connecticut 06820
(203) 655-6053**

**Parent Handbook
2011-2012**

St. Thomas More Happiness Preschool

Objectives

To impart to each child love of God, self and neighbor through creative learning activities.

To provide a loving, supportive atmosphere for learning and play.

To help the child learn about himself and the world around him/her.

To develop self-control and self-discipline and assist the child in coping with problems, learning to share, taking turns and using energy for constructive purposes.

To encourage exploration, discovery and awareness through interaction with peers and adults alike.

The Organization of the Program

The Director will oversee staff and curriculum, as well as the implementation of policy and philosophy. She will be available to assist both parents and staff with all matters of concern relative to all children enrolled. She will act as family liaison to the pastor, the parish and the community at-large. In working with parents and staff, the Director will coordinate any support agencies that may prove helpful to the children enrolled in the program.

Our Happiness Preschool teachers provide the children in their care with a loving supportive and nurturing environment in which to grow and develop. Teachers create a cheerful and stimulating atmosphere and plan their lessons and activities according to the guidelines established by the school for their particular age group.

Any parent or staff member who has a concern and/or grievance that has not been resolved to their satisfaction by the Director, may present their concerns directly to the Pastor, Father J. Barry Furey.

St. Thomas More Happiness Preschool

Program Goals

Social

1. To enable the child to play cooperatively in a group
2. To encourage the child to share materials equipment and ideas
3. To encourage participation as a leader as well as a follower
4. To develop a respect for the rights and opinions of others
5. To assist the child in accepting responsibility for his/her actions

Emotional

1. To develop a feeling of security in school
2. To help the child to build positive relationships with peers, teachers and other adults
3. To give the child opportunities for developing a good self-image and a positive attitude
4. To encourage the child to express his/her emotions and channel them in constructive ways
5. To encourage the child to be independent and self-reliant
6. To build a sense of empathy for the feelings and emotions of others

Intellectual

1. To provide opportunities for the child to experiment
2. To enable the child to make observations and recall details
3. To provide opportunities for the child to make age appropriate decisions and solve problems
4. To develop a positive attitude toward learning
5. To provide developmentally appropriate curriculum in language development, mathematics, science, music and art

Physical

1. To develop large and small motor skills
2. To provide a balanced program of activity and rest
3. To encourage the child to develop desirable health and safety habits
4. To accept and understand and respect disabilities in themselves and others

Saint Thomas More Happiness Preschool

Policies & Guidelines

Enrollment Policy

In an effort to accommodate enrollment demands for placement in the St. Thomas More Happiness Preschool, registered and supporting parishioners of St. Thomas More are given preference over non-parishioners.

Factors considered in placement include but are not limited to the following:

1. Requests from alumni families
2. Requests for placement of siblings of currently enrolled children
3. The level of parish participation and support
4. Special circumstances

Children must be three years of age by December 31st in order to be eligible in the three year old program. ****Readiness issues relative to the individual child should be considered prior to enrollment.** All children must be toilet trained prior to the beginning of school.

Every effort is made to honor requests for specific classes (regarding days and times) however, enrollment demands may necessitate alternate placement.

Final enrollment decisions are made jointly between the Preschool Director and our Pastor, Father Paul G. Murphy.

****Note:**

Occasionally, subsequent to initial enrollment (3-4 weeks), it is determined that a child has been inappropriately placed in our program. If after identifying that a child has not adjusted well to the program offered; after making a reasonable accommodation; conferring with parents – and professionals, as needed; the parents or the school may determine that the child's withdrawal from the program is in the child's best interest. In such an event a tuition adjustment will be considered.

St. Thomas More Happiness Preschool

Policies & Guidelines

Policy for Arrival - Dismissal & Late Pick-Up

<u>Three's</u>	
Arrival:	9:00 am
Dismissal:	12:00 pm

<u>Four's and Older Four's</u>	
Arrival:	9:00 am
Dismissal:	1:00 pm

Please note, that we are unable to accommodate children arriving earlier than the scheduled time for their particular session. Parents must deliver and pick children up in their classrooms. If you expect to be delayed, please call the pre-school office at 655-6053 and advise the Director of your anticipated arrival time.

If your child is not picked up at the designated pick-up time and we have not heard from you, the Director will:

1. Attempt to contact parents at home, at work, and on cell phones
2. Call emergency contacts listed on the emergency information form
3. Ask the emergency contact person to pick your child up if we have been unsuccessful in locating you. A message will be left on your answering machine to let you know which one of your emergency contacts has picked your child up.

Carpool Arrangements

Should you wish to arrange a carpool please keep arrangements as uncomplicated as possible. Carpool arrangements are frequently a major adjustment for the children in the beginning of the school year. Knowing who will be delivering and/or picking up is very important to each child. If someone other than yourself will be transporting your child at any time a written note to that effect must be given to your child's teacher specifying the name of the person you have authorized to transport your child.

Connecticut state law requires that no child be released without written authorization from the parent or legal guardian.

The pick-up person may be asked to provide identification

The pick-up person should sign your child in/out on that occasion

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Policies & Guidelines

Parking Lot Safety and Security

When delivering or picking up children, please park in the parking lot, not at the curb in the front of the school building. Traffic goes in one direction down to the end of the parking lot and around the island toward the exit of the driveway. To further insure the safety and security of the children and staff, the exterior doors at the parking lot entrance will be locked from the outside from 9:30 am - 11:45 am. If it is necessary to pick up your child earlier than usual, please do so by using the doors by the church office. Please drive slowly and exercise extreme caution; everyone's safety and security is most important to us!

Birthdays

We are happy to celebrate your child's birthday at school. Birthdays are lots of fun, not only for the birthday child but for the rest of the class. If you would like to provide a special treat for your child's class please be sure to let your child's teacher know ahead of time. Some parents of allergic children may want to keep "safe" cookies or ice cream here at school for such occasions. If you are planning a home party and wish to distribute invitations please do so only if you are inviting the entire class.

Lunch Bunch

Lunch bunch will begin for all 3's classes on the Monday, September 26th 2011 and will be made available Monday through Friday. The last day for lunch bunch will be Thursday, May 31th 2012. The cost is \$10.00 per day, the time is 12:00pm-1:00pm. Sign-up will take place in Mrs. Patricelli's office on a daily basis. Please make checks payable to Saint Thomas More Happiness Preschool. There will be no refunds. Sign-up will be done on a first come first served basis, with a limit of 15 children per class.

Social Activities

Please be sensitive to the feelings of the other children in the class when making after school social arrangements. Children become aware very quickly of "who is doing what, with whom." To eliminate any upset at dismissal time, we ask that you make all social arrangements for your child prior to coming to school.

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Policies & Guidelines

Clothing

Please be certain that your child is dressed appropriately for the weather including hat, mittens, and boots when necessary. We will be playing outdoors everyday unless the weather dictates that we have an indoor play period. An extra change of clothing should be brought to school at the beginning of the school year. Please label all clothing and place in a plastic bag. Sneakers are a must every day. Our activities include painting, outdoor play, sand & water play, and other potentially messy projects so please do not send your child in his/her best clothes. Mishaps do happen and we do want the children to feel free to participate in all activities without concern for spills and splotches. To develop further independence in children in caring for their own needs we ask that clothing be simple no complicated belts, snaps, or fasteners.

Daily Routines

All classes will be comprised of a balance of quiet and active times. The children will have the opportunity to select activities from various areas of interest. Some of the many activities include;

Art Activities	Block Building
Housekeeping	Dramatic Play
Puzzles	Easel Painting
Reading/Book	Manipulative Games & Toys

There will be more structured times of the day such as;

Snack Time	Story Time
Music	Outdoor Play (or Indoor Gym Play)
Movement	

Children are both excited and anxious as they move into their new environment of preschool. On one hand, they are spontaneous and affectionate, while on the other, they are shy and hesitant, needing reassurance and encouragement. Children often learn best through exploration. They need time to become actively engaged in handling materials and equipment so that objects and experiences can best relate to their world. In their relationships with each others, children learn to accept feelings and interests of others by sharing, taking turns, and playing with other children. The adults who are actively involved with the feelings of the children can help to promote an attitude of consideration and cooperation by

setting firm and sensible guidelines by being fair and consistent in discipline.

St. Thomas More Happiness Preschool

Policies & Guidelines

Religious Education

Religious education is an integral component of our Happiness Preschool program. Children learn that we are all members of God's family. As members of the St. Thomas More community, children grow in their relationships within their families, church, and school. All our children use RCL Benziger series "Stories of God's Love". In addition, our Godly Play curriculum immerses the children in stories from the Bible, the Old Testament and Creation through the Prophets. This presents the experience of God in their lives, and through Godly Play the children experience the "Mystery" of the presence of God in their lives.

"Show & Tell" or "Share Day"

Each month your child's class will be focusing on a theme for the month. The theme plan will be posted at your child's classroom door so that you can see what the class will be doing. Your child's teacher may choose to incorporate "Show & Tell" or "Share Day" into the theme by suggesting that the children share some special personal item (such as a book or toy which may relate to the month's activities). We recognize the security factor toys provide for children, especially at the beginning of the school year, or when parents are away. Please be sure that your child knows and understands that his/her teacher may want the toy put away during activity times. Toy guns, swords, super hero figures, or items that could harm another child are not permitted.

Discipline Policy

Our discipline policy is based on the standards set by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Teachers are expected to establish simple fair rules in their classrooms and follow them consistently. The children should play an active role in developing rules for their classrooms.

Good behavior should be rewarded throughout the day with frequent smiles, praise, and encouragement. Children should be shown positive alternatives rather than just being told "no". They should be encouraged to talk about

their feelings so that staff can better help the child deal with frustration or anger that he/she may be feeling. Any child, who is disruptive, may be removed from the activity by one of the teachers in order to redirect the child to more appropriate behavior, to calm him/her, and/or to discuss the situation and suggest more appropriate behaviors. The words “time out” should be avoided since this can have a negative connotation for the child.

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Policies & Guidelines

Discipline Policy (continued)

There may be a rare occasion when after repeated efforts in the classroom behavior warrants removal from the classroom setting to help the child understand that his/her classroom behavior is unacceptable and have the Director help reinforce the expectations. You may be notified so that we may work together to elicit positive results. This is not meant to be punitive but to be helpful in your child’s understanding of safe and socially acceptable behavior.

Our staff is not permitted to;

- use harsh or abusive language when dealing with children
- use physical restraint unless the child is in danger of hurting himself or others
- deprive children of food (snacks) as a punishment for unacceptable behavior
- use humiliating tones of voice or frightening language when dealing with children

School Closings - Delays & Early Dismissals

Whenever the Darien public schools close due to inclement weather the Happiness Preschool will close as well. In the event of a delayed opening when Darien schools announce a ninety (90) minute delay our classes will begin at 10:00 am.

In the event of an early dismissal due to inclement weather conditions arising after the start of the school day, we will advise you at drop off or via telephone. No lunch bunch will be offered on days of early dismissal.

For school closings or delays, please listen to WNLK1350AM, WSTC1400 AM, WGCH1450 AM, WEZN99.9FM. You will also find closing information on Cablevision Channel 12 and WTNH Channel 8.

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Policies & Guidelines

Medical & Health Forms

The State of Connecticut licensing requires that each child must have a recently completed health form on file at the school prior to commencing attendance. The form must indicate all inoculations received as well as a notation of recent physical examination. In addition, the form must include information regarding special health problems such as allergies, hearing or vision impairment, special dietary needs, chronic illnesses, developmental variations, or a history of a contagious disease. You will be sent a new medical form when your child's update is due (we must have a yearly physical on record) or you may obtain a form if your child is receiving any other immunizations or health services.

Please note: neither the Director nor any staff member is permitted to administer topical medications however, contact the Director if your child requires an EpiPen for possible severe allergic reactions. In order for our program to administer this and remain license compliant, we must adhere to state regulations for the administration and storage of such emergency medications. We are happy to discuss any unusual medical situation with you.

Changes in Routine

If there are changes in your home routine such as parent trips, house guests or hospitalization of a family member etc. please let us know. This information enables us to help your child cope with what may be a difficult time. It would help us in better understanding and dealing with any unusual behavior.

Communication

Please feel free to talk to your child's teacher and/or the Director at any time. Open and comfortable communication between home and school is essential to quality child care. Please remember not to discuss concerns or

problems in front of your child. Should you wish to contact the Director or your child's teacher during school hours please call the office at 203-655-6053. If there is not answer please leave a message on the answering machine and your call will be returned.

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Policies & Guidelines

Toilet Training

Our policy is that your three year old must be toilet trained in order to attend the pre-school. Three year olds may not wear diapers or pull-ups. Children must have achieved bladder and bowel control and be able to manage their own clothing (with minimal help) and be able to wipe themselves and wash their hands.

Teachers bring the children to the bathroom in groups and individually as needed. It is important that the children have the language which enables them to tell the teachers that they need to use the toilet at alternate times other than group trips to the bathroom. It may be helpful to your child if you encourage them to use the bathroom prior to coming into the classroom.

We understand that children playing at the water table may wet their pants or that there may be occasions when a child becomes so involved in a play activity that they simply forget. For this reason, we ask you to provide a change of clothes including socks. This situation is different however, from the child who soils regularly and has not gained sufficient bodily control, this child is not quite ready for our program. We will therefore, change a child who has an accident and we will place the soiled clothing in a plastic bag. In some situations, you may be called to come for your child, if the accident involves a bowel movement for the comfort and hygiene of your child as our program is not equipped with such state-required changing facilities.

St. Thomas More Happiness Preschool

Health Policy Procedure

Health Policy

We are most interested in providing a healthy atmosphere for your child at Happiness Preschool. Please assist us by observing the following health guidelines.

Children *may not attend school* if they have:

- a. a fever of 101° or higher
- b. a cold or cold symptoms such as fever, runny nose, sore throat, earache, or persistent cough
- c. diarrhea
- d. vomiting
- e. nasal discharge that is green or yellow in color
- f. any skin rash must be diagnosed by your physician and a doctor's note must be submitted to the Director indicating that the condition is not contagious in order for your child to return to school
- g. any miscellaneous contagious infection such as pink eye, impetigo, etc.

Children *may return to school* when:

- a. temperature has returned to normal for 24 hours after Tylenol has been discontinued
- b. diarrhea has stopped for 24 hours, the child's bowel movements have returned to normal
- c. vomiting has stopped and the child's eating habits have returned to normal
- d. nasal discharge is clear of infection
- e. rashes have been checked by your doctor and written notification has been submitted to the Director indicating that the condition is non-infectious
- f. Your child feels well enough to participate in activities

St. Thomas More Happiness Preschool

Complaint Policy Procedure

from the State Licensing Regulations

This is the procedure for child day care programs which as licensed under the authority of Connecticut general statute's 19a-79-1a through 19a-79-12

Most problems within a day care center are non-life threatening and can be resolved by:

Discussing the problem with the classroom teacher

Discussing the problem with the program director

If the problem is not resolved you may contact the department of public health

In case of an emergency, notify the department of public health as soon as the emergency is under control.

In case of abuse/neglect or life threatening situations contact the department of children and families at 1-800-842-2288 and the department of public health – day care licensing unit.

All inspection reports and compliance letters are available for your inspection at this preschool program or by contacting the department of public health – day care licensing unit.

The State Department of Public Health – Day Care Licensing Unit

410 Capitol Avenue – MS#12DAC

1-800-282-6063

P.O. Box 340308

1-800-439-0437

Hartford, CT 06134-0308

(860) 509-8045

The same process works for compliments as well!

NAPP2:17: and Revised 6/12/96

St. Thomas More Happiness Preschool

Handbook Signature Form

**I have read, understood and agree to abide by the guidelines
and policies as described in the Parent Handbook.**

My Child Name _____
(Please Print)

(Parent Signature)

(Date)

*Thank you for choosing **St. Thomas More Happiness Preschool***